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ABSTRACT

The current priority of the Council of Chief State School Officers is to improve education and experiences that bridge youth and adulthood and prepare youth for immediate or eventual productive careers after high school. To that end, the council supports cooperative education; "tech prep"; youth apprenticeship; mentoring; service learning; and shared responsibility and commitment among schools, employers, and employee organizations. Expanding on previous initiatives that have helped to structure pathways for young people from high school to college and through vocational education to work, the council points out the challenge to expand the opportunities for all students to reach high levels of academic achievement and introduction into the work world. Some principles for change include the following: (1) schools must view preparation of youth for employment as part of their primary responsibility; (2) every student should participate in a program that guarantees access to postsecondary education, training, and employment; and (3) alliances among schools, employers, and employee associations must be formed. Strategies suggested include the following: developing an awareness of what should be taught in schools; making a commitment toward research into the kinds of behavior needed for adult roles; reorganizing instruction so that students become active participants; restructuring secondary education to integrate the academic, vocational, and general curricula; and providing supported work opportunities for students. (KC)

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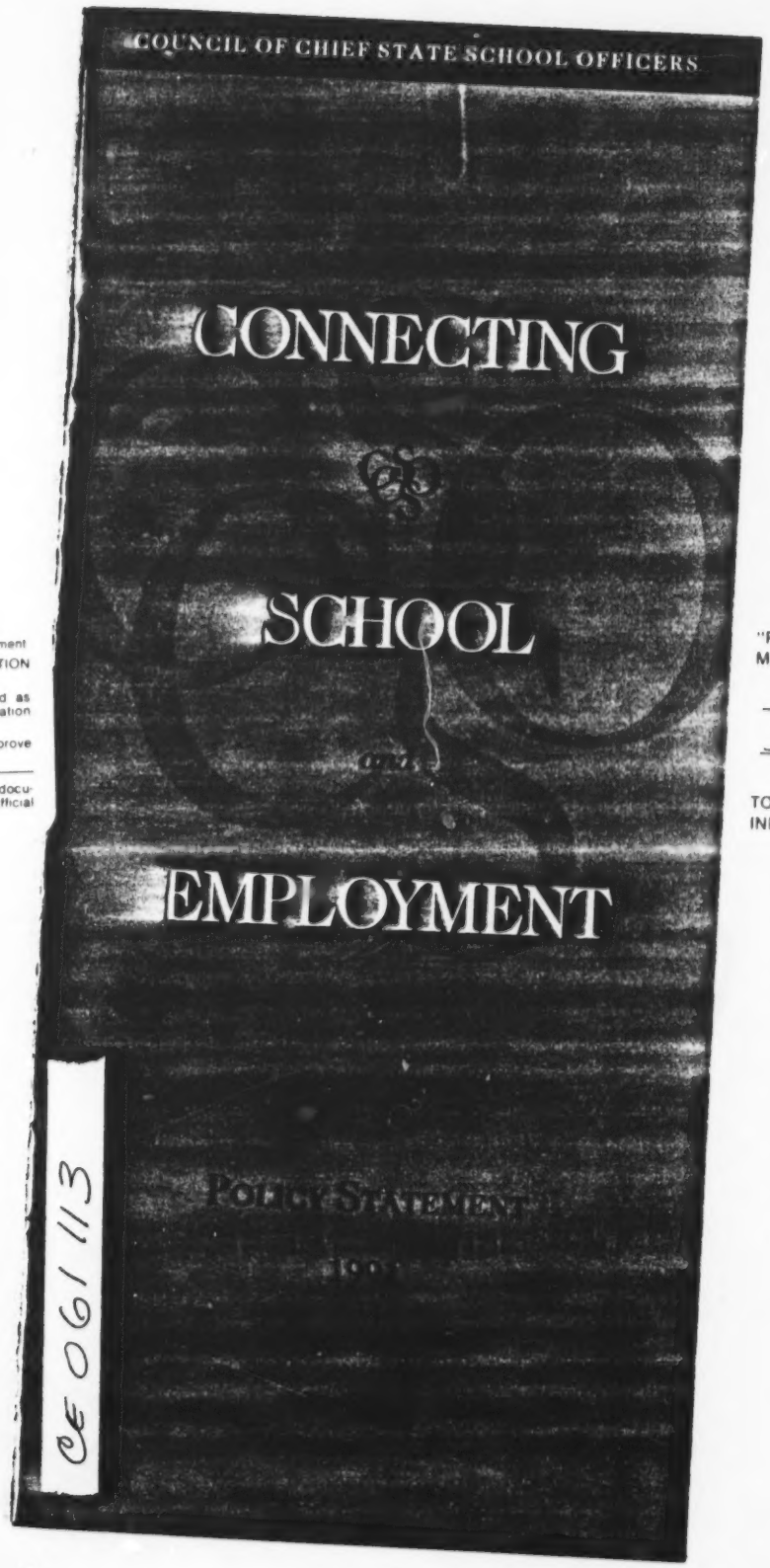


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## COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS (CCSSO)

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide non-profit organization of the 57 public officials who head departments of public education in the 50 states, five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Dependents Schools. It has functioned as an independent national council since 1927 and has maintained a Washington office since 1948. CCSSO seeks its members' consensus on major education issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, to federal agencies, to Congress, and to the public. Through its structure of committees and task forces, the Council responds to a broad range of concerns about education and provides leadership on major education issues.

Because the Council represents each state's chief education administrator, it has access to the educational and governmental establishment in each state and to the national influence that accompanies this unique position. CCSSO forms coalitions with many other education organizations and is able to provide leadership for a variety of policy concerns that affect elementary and secondary education. Thus, CCSSO members are able to act cooperatively on matters vital to the education of America's young people.

The CCSSO Resource Center on Educational Equity provides services designed to achieve equity and high quality education for minorities, women and girls, and for the disabled, limited English proficient, and low-income students. The Center is responsible for managing and staffing a variety of CCSSO leadership initiatives to assure education success for all children and youth, especially those placed at risk of school failure.

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# CONNECTING SCHOOL AND EMPLOYMENT

### A Policy Statement by the Council of Chief State School Officers

## INTRODUCTION

For 1991, the Council of Chief State School Officers' priority is "Connecting School and Employment." The goal is to improve education and experiences that bridge youth and adulthood and prepare American youth for immediate or eventual productive employed careers. We support changes in schools that promote a quality primary and secondary education with early orientation to work that enables all young people to pursue continued education and challenging employment. We envision broad curriculum changes that integrate learning in the classroom and learning through experience in the workplace. We advocate major modifications in how instruction is organized and provided in both academic and vocational education curriculums. We propose the expanded use of proven structures to introduce and develop the skills, knowledge and behavior youth will need in their adult years. These structures include cooperative education, "tech prep," youth apprenticeship, mentoring and service learning. Finally, we advocate a shared responsibility and commitment among schools, employers and employee organizations in bringing about these changes.

In pursuing these changes, we seek to achieve greater opportunities for success in and out of school for all youth. We seek to motivate our young people to undertake challenging programs of study and training linked to prospects of rewarding careers and continued learning. These new structures and programs should particularly support the development of skills for strategic occupations—those which are internationally competitive. Special attention must be given to the strategic occupations in contrast with "protected" occupations where there is little or no competition from foreign countries nor substantial threat

such services might be taken "off shore". These changes should result in higher levels of meaningful participation of *all* youth—particularly young women, minorities, youth from low-income families, those with limited English proficiency, and those with disabilities—in emerging and rewarding areas of the labor force.

This statement of policy sets forth the principles and strategies necessary to achieve these goals. It is to be used by chief state school officers and state education agencies to increase awareness among parents, the business and labor communities, teacher educators, policymakers and education staff of the pressing need for improved programming in our schools and communities to support employment preparation and continued education for all youth—especially those underserved by our current systems of education, training and employment. This statement provides guidance in developing models and new linkages to prepare young people for employment and for life as productive members of our society.

## BACKGROUND

Through its policy statements and activities over the years, the Council has had a central role in improving the structure and quality of education with the goal of ensuring success for all in our schools. We have done this by calling for accessible, high-quality early childhood and family education programs to improve child readiness for learning in the states. We called for changes in the organization and type of knowledge stressed in schools. We support a move from an emphasis on minimal competencies to an emphasis on higher order abilities and critical thinking skills—and a move to extend opportunities to all students to learn such skills. We advocate reforms to establish a high-quality core curriculum of knowledge available to all students and have endorsed efforts, particularly in vocational education, to provide for better integration of academic and occupational skill development. In addition, the Council calls for changes in the structure of schools to account for different rates and ways of learning, thus improving each student's opportunity for maximum learning.

It is our conviction that, as policymakers, educators and service providers, we have the power, the responsibility, the knowledge and the resources at hand to ensure that the benefits of education culminating in the high school diploma are common to all. Yet, even as we make the changes in our schools that should result in a 100-percent graduation rate by the year 2000, rapid changes in the world order of nations, businesses, institutions and cultures warrant the need to accelerate, sharpen and broaden our expectations and goals for the type of education and life preparation required for the greatest numbers of our youth.

The social and economic imperatives of the 1990s demonstrate that acquisition of the high school diploma alone is not enough to prepare and ensure the type of citizenry and work force this nation's future requires. If we are to remain competitive in an increasingly sophisticated world market; if we are to resolve many of our country's pressing social, economic and environmental problems; if we are to use our wealth of human resources wisely; and if we are to ensure equity and opportunity to all, we must give new currency and continuity to our most basic credential—the high school diploma. Because employment will become an eventual goal and reality for virtually all young people, the high school diploma must represent a recognized milestone of accomplishment and readiness redeemable for employment and further education and training.

The Council expands our initial goal of high school graduation to one that encompasses gainful employment for all youth. Reaching this goal will require restructuring of education priorities, establishing new patterns of involvement and linkages with other institutions, and providing greater flexibility in the ways continuing education and initial employment are combined.

In tackling this challenge, we begin to expand the work and life options for a wide range of students, especially those whose options are most narrow at present. We begin to align more closely our curriculums to the development of knowledge and skills required of our future work force and provide structured experiences for employment orientation and exploration. Finally, we make new alliances with labor and industry to plan for and support the transition of young people from school through initial employment and into career ladders of advancement for technical personnel, professional staff and wage earners.

## THE CHALLENGE

We have been successful in structuring pathways for young people from high school to postsecondary education and in organizing resources and programs that prepare, advise, document, measure and fund for college success. For a smaller group of students, we offer quality programs of vocational educational that provide career development and access to skilled employment or further education and training.

Where they exist, specialized vocational high schools affiliated with particular industries have been successful in preparing students with differing abilities but similar interests for occupation (extending well beyond entry-level skills) and college entry. These schools have out performed regular high schools on indicators such as rates of graduation, percentage of students taking the SAT, average combined SAT scores, and percentage of minority students scoring above their racial group mean. The industrial affiliations of these specialized schools have provided students with cooperative education experiences in a range of industrial settings previously inaccessible. These affiliations have also deeply immersed the industries in the instruction and motivation of students. Yet these examples of high-quality programs are the exception, not the rule.

Many young people have only limited access to programs that provide supervised orientation to the workplace and effectively combine classroom and work-based education. Few high school juniors and seniors participate in cooperative education—which systematically combines classroom instruction with paid work experience and on-the-job training relating to a student's career interest. Apprenticeship, a form of paid work-based learning and credentialing with a long tradition in this country, is available to very few workers (less than 300,000) in a limited number of trades—and it is seldom accessible to entry-level workers or school-age youth (the average age of apprentices is 29).

We have not developed the necessary structures at the appropriate scale for ensuring systematic access to the workplace and success in employment for the majority of youth who will seek to enter employment before or during completion of some form of higher education. Fifty percent of high school graduates do not go directly into postsecondary education; and an additional 25 percent begin postsecondary education but do not complete bachelors' degrees. For these young people, preparation for postsecondary experiences often includes only general courses that lack academic rigor, supplemented by introductory vocational education courses that focus on developing entry-level skills. Compared with college preparation programs, there has been no comparable commitment of resources for preparing, advising, documenting, measuring and funding for workplace success.

Our goal is to produce young adults with high levels of academic achievement and broad competencies—high school graduates equipped to pursue successfully a range of continuing education, training and occupational options. To ensure that all youth have these options will require extensive changes in secondary education—how we structure and organize our curriculums, what times and places of instruction we offer, and how we use our resources.

Changes in schools alone cannot bring about the solutions we seek in educating youth whose secondary education ensures real choices in adult life. New technology creates constant changes in worker competencies and workplace dynamics. And schools find it increasingly difficult to anticipate these changes and develop appropriate programming. Therefore, we must marshall the resources that exist in our vast business infrastructures and employee organizations to join with schools in preparing young people for citizen responsibility and employment. We must seek out new partnerships to ensure an expanded learning environment for our youth and to provide quality school-based and work-based experiences that are reinforcing and motivating. Bringing about these partnerships will require changes in the connections these institutions make with schools and in their commitment to the education and training of their future work force.

Many countries have developed systems of youth preparation that successfully integrate work-based learning with school-based learning so that they are systematically reinforcing and provide a smooth transition for students as they develop



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from youth to adulthood. These systems, however, are founded on strong programs of primary education that ground youth in high levels of knowledge, which they continue to pursue parallel to their work-based studies. In these countries, schools, employers and labor unions work in tandem to develop and provide education, mentoring and other supportive experiences for youth. Each institution has a vested interest in ensuring quality experiences for youth in its respective sphere of interest, and each institution takes its responsibilities seriously. Youth have responsibilities to learn and opportunities to explore careers and develop occupational skills at work sites under real-life conditions with experienced adults in the field. In return for their commitment to the education and employment experience, young people receive remuneration, instruction and support. Surrounding these practices are broad national and state policies, social programs and traditions that support both the youth and the participating institutions throughout the education and training continuum.

Establishing smooth and seamless connections between school and employment for all youth in the United States will create new demands and challenges, as well as benefits, for schools, businesses, employee unions and social service organizations. Experience in many countries indicates that high-performance work organizations are clearly linked with highly skilled workers who exercise direct discretion and responsibility on the job. Where industry is directly involved in the education of young people, it has ready access to a pool of qualified youth from which to draw for its employment needs. It is the work of schools and social service agencies to ensure services and experiences that support the development of individuals ready and able to tackle the demands of high-performance work organizations. It is the job of the employer and employees to evolve and maintain high-performance organizations that are receptive to students schooled and supported in this manner.

In partnership, we can create learning and working environments that support experiences and opportunities that provide our youth with transitions from school to employment and lifelong learning. These experiences transform work places into places of personal growth. In partnership, we can find solutions to many of our common problems of challenging, motivating and channeling young people along the most productive pathways. In partnership, we can find ways to support new commitments to sustained and comprehensive human development for all our youth. This is our charge if we are to prepare workers and citizens ready for the challenges of a competitive, interlinking world market.

## PRINCIPLES FOR CHANGE

The Council views improving connections between school and employment as a critical catalyst in the restructuring of elementary and secondary education and the relationships among schools and other stakeholders in the community—businesses, employee unions and social service organizations. In providing structured pathways between school and employment, we begin to help our youth make the critical connections between learning in the classroom and success in the workplace and take the initial steps leading to career advancement and continued education. The Council offers the following principles to policymakers, education decision makers, employers, employee unions and social service agencies as we seek changes in schools and other relevant institutions to improve the preparation of youth for gainful employment and continued learning.

SCHOOLS MUST VIEW PREPARATION OF YOUTH FOR EMPLOYMENT AS PART OF THEIR PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY. To fulfill this responsibility, schools must provide appropriate curriculums, resources, times and places of learning and be held primarily accountable for the level of work readiness of their students. There must be no compromise in the level of rigor or richness of programs that support employment readiness, and schools must be fully committed to program quality and high standards of performance for students and staff. Beginning in the primary grades, schools must make clear for all students the connection between learning in school and future success in the labor market and must provide opportunities for career and employment orientation and

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awareness. Schools and employers must expand recognition and rewards that recognize accomplishments in practical learning and create incentives and means for students to learn—and earn—in work settings. Schools must clearly communicate student accomplishments to prospective employers.

EVERY STUDENT SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN A PROGRAM THAT GUARANTEES ACCESS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT. Programs of general studies that do not produce high rates of graduation with promise for continued education or employment must be replaced with programs that prepare young people for continued education and employment in high-performance workplaces. These new programs must be founded on high-quality elementary and middle school education and career orientation that prepare students for branching opportunities across and within a number of demanding options.

EMPLOYERS AND EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONS MUST ASSUME NEW RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH AND THE INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES THAT SUPPORT THE GROWTH AND MAINTENANCE OF A HIGHLY SKILLED WORK FORCE. Employers, as a primary benefactor of successful students, must share a greater responsibility for establishing and nurturing the quality of the work force. Together with employee organizations, employers should:

- clearly define and communicate to schools the competencies they require of successful employees;
- incorporate newly developed "employer-friendly" school records in their employment procedures;
- reward first-time job seekers for their academic achievements and employment-preparation experiences;
- provide expanded opportunities for work-based learning for students;
- develop special programs for the transition of youth from school into initial employment (e.g., youth apprenticeship);
- ensure opportunity for high-wage employment for young adults who have successfully completed these programs; and
- nurture the development of young people through structured ladders of career advancement.

SCHOOLS MUST INTEGRATE THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE INTO THE CURRICULUM; AND METHODS, MATERIALS AND STRATEGIES MUST SUPPORT THIS INTEGRATION. Research strongly supports the benefits of learning through practical experience and in contextual settings, over the benefits of acquiring abstract knowledge alone. Research and experience also attest to the motivational benefits and performance that result when people are provided authentic tasks and work situations in which they can solve problems and engage in cognitive activities. Moreover, both practical and theoretical knowledge are strengthened when combined. To accommodate fully a range of learning styles and preferences and to maximize the capacities of many more of our students, schools must effectively use and integrate theoretical and practical learning experiences and create expanded opportunities for work-based learning.

NEW, FORMAL AND SUBSTANTIVE ALLIANCES ARE REQUIRED AMONG SCHOOLS, POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS, EMPLOYERS, EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATIONS AND SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS TO PREPARE YOUTH FOR SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS. These institutions must take on new roles and responsibilities to develop and support new mechanisms of instruction, curriculum and services and to motivate and support young people throughout the period of preparation. All study sites must develop well-conceived curriculums that reinforce both theoretical and experiential learning.

STRUCTURED PATHWAYS TO CONTINUED EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT MUST BE DIVERSE, FLEXIBLE, RECOGNIZED BY ALL STAKEHOLDERS AND ACCESSIBLE TO ENSURE THE WIDEST SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS. There is no one way or pattern of employment preparation for all students, for all job markets, for all businesses and industries or for all parts of the country. Therefore, institutions must develop creative structures that are:

- flexible in preparing students for continued education and initial and subsequent employment;
- accessible to a wide range of students (e.g., those with disabilities, those with limited English proficiency, and young women);

• endorsed by the education, training and employment communities;

• fair in the use of assessments for job-related competencies and credentialing; and

• motivationally and financially sustaining of youth through to full employment.

IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO DEVELOP A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK OR STRUCTURE OF STANDARDS FOR EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS. The framework should incorporate both content and student-performance standards. The national framework should include a variety of approaches to reach these standards.

THE ESSENTIAL PURPOSE OF ASSESSMENTS OF WORKFORCE READINESS IS TO IMPROVE STUDENT PERFORMANCE. Such assessments should help students, parents and educators discover the knowledge, skills, and behavior—including the ability to work together in a diverse labor force—needed for successful entry into the workplace; develop these skills; and document them.

CHANGES IN HOW WE PREPARE YOUTH FOR THE WORKPLACE MUST BE CONSIDERED WITHIN THE BROADER CONTEXT OF AN ECONOMIC POLICY FOR NATIONAL AND INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND A SOCIAL VISION ABOUT THE PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT IN PEOPLE'S LIVES AND SOCIETY. To be successful, changes in schools must help raise expectations within the community of employers and the larger society for a better prepared and more highly skilled work force. These changes must be accompanied and supported by national employment, training, health and human service policies. We must create structured partnerships among business, labor, education and social service agencies to provide forums for collaborative decision-making on issues of employment preparation. We must hold forums to develop a consensus on the maximum levels of education, training, support and compensation that are realistically attainable by the greatest number of individuals in our society and what policy and resource commitments are necessary if these goals are to be met.

## STRATEGIES

Systemic change in the way we prepare the entry-level work force, develop career ladders and allocate our resources for education and training must be guided by a national policy for both the strategic and protected businesses and occupations. At the federal level, research is needed in areas of best practices in school- and work-based training; the development of standards for programs of education and training; the development of data bases on entry and credentialing requirements; and the demand for and availability of occupations. Comparable information must be made available at the state and local levels to guide programs, advisers, students and parents in the preparation process for careers.

Staff development in our schools and our places of employment must become a greatly expanded investment if change is to be realized. Education and labor interests must formulate policies and make a commitment to support staff training at the federal, state and local levels.

The leadership of chief state school officers will be essential for state-level success in achieving the curriculum, credentialing, governance and funding reforms we seek. State curriculum frameworks must reflect preparation for employment as one of many outcomes of education and ensure that curriculums are organized on a continuum based on the skills, knowledge and behavior students will need in their adult years. Locally based demonstrations of improved school-to-work transition will neither last nor expand if they are not stitched into state policy and practice as a mainstream activity and supported by national policy. State education agencies must take a leading role in advancing the broader adoption and use of local strategies for creating new transitions for our young people.

Critical to supporting these changes are the will and commitment of businesses and employee organizations to work in true partnership with schools to effect the reforms needed at the school and the workplace if successful linkages are to be realized. Improved school and employment connections cannot be viewed solely as a youth issue, but as affecting a range of employee concerns and development issues. Employers must work closely with schools and other education institutions to ensure that mechanisms for initial employment

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and continued growth and development of employees are securely in place and available for workers of all statuses and levels.

The following actions should be taken in every state to establish curriculums that promote a school-to-work system:

DEVELOP AN AWARENESS PROGRAM TO CREATE UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED FOR CHANGE IN WHAT IS TAUGHT IN OUR SCHOOLS. This program must be targeted to the general public, as well as the teaching staff, to support a curriculum with relevance to the world of work.

MAKE A COMMITMENT TO ONGOING RESEARCH ON THE IDENTIFICATION OF SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE AND KINDS OF BEHAVIOR NEEDED FOR ADULT ROLES. There is also need for research and evaluation of the structures used and methods for providing young people with transitions from school to work. Research should examine the timing and location of such programs—whether in the school or the workplace—to provide the types of experiences students need and employers want in an effective work force. Research also should consider the types of services required to support the social, health and economic self-sufficiency of young adults in making the transition to employment.

REORGANIZE THE FORMS OF INSTRUCTION SO THAT STUDENTS BECOME ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN THE LEARNING PROCESS. Change the role of teacher from disseminator of information to manager and coach of the instructional process. Broaden the methods used in teaching to include active, hands-on environments that are more compatible with how learning occurs in the work world.

RESTRUCTURE SECONDARY EDUCATION TO PROVIDE FOR THE INTEGRATION OF ACADEMIC, VOCATIONAL STUDIES AND WORK-BASED LEARNING, AND TO SUPPORT STRUCTURED TRANSITIONS TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT, COMPLEMENTED BY APPROPRIATE CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, COUNSELING AND OTHER SERVICES. Schools should review current policies and practices with a view to facilitating connections between school and employment for students and eliminating barriers. Such restructuring will include:

- revising the curriculum and requirements so that students pursue a rigorous program of study at both the school and the work site;
- expanding rewards and student recognition to encompass a range of student accomplishments;
- providing the proper guidance and adult supervision for workplace success;
- addressing individual student needs and barriers to participation (e.g., transportation, stipends, child care) in expanded career preparation programs; and
- providing employers with information that describes student achievement and accomplishments and that is available in a timely and useful manner.

Applied academics programs should be available for all students, not just for those who may not move on to higher education. All students should be taught how to apply knowledge so that they can be successful in the work world, whether as an entry-level worker, a mid-level technician, or a manager/professional.

EXPAND SUCCESSFUL METHODS FOR INTEGRATING ACADEMIC AND OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION AND WORK-BASED LEARNING, SUCH AS HIGH-QUALITY COOPERATIVE EDUCATION, YOUTH APPRENTICESHIP AND SERVICE LEARNING. THESE EFFORTS SHOULD INCLUDE REPLICATING SPECIAL-FOCUS HIGH SCHOOLS AFFILIATED WITH INDUSTRIES. These methods and models should provide:

- opportunities for guided learning provided by employers in the context of part-time employment to allow for immediate feedback and the development of student work experience;
- opportunities for hands-on experiences and applications of theoretical information;
- ongoing planning and collaboration between school and industry personnel in support of curriculum and instructional practices; and
- opportunities for students to combine work experience and education as a means of career planning and decision making.

Students in these programs should obtain a high school diploma, postsecondary credentials and certification of occupational skills.

CREATE AND SUPPORT NEW EXPECTATIONS OF BOTH SCHOOL AND WORK-SITE STAFF FOR PREPARING AND CHANNELING YOUTH INTO HIGH-PERFORMANCE EMPLOYMENT. This will require extensive retraining and development of staff at the school and the work site to assume new roles and responsibilities and to forge new relationships and instructional experiences for young people. It will also require a major commitment to ongoing staff development to support major curriculum changes.

CHANGE STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEMS TO MAKE THEM MORE MEANINGFUL TO EMPLOYERS, PARENTS AND OTHERS. Student information or report-card systems should be modified to reflect what students actually know and can do in the skill, knowledge and behavior areas selected. To build and document a pattern of success, schools should display student progress in levels from rudimentary knowledge to mastery of complex skills.

INSTITUTE STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS OF STUDENT KNOWLEDGE AND PERFORMANCE LEVELS, TIED TO THE STATE'S CORE CURRICULUM AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS. These assessments in a number of subject areas should result in a portable credential certifying student performance in a range of skill and competency areas. These credentials would be incorporated in a newly developed, employer-friendly record, along with a transcript summary and other work-related information that employers would be encouraged to use in their hiring and training decisions. These assessments would be administered in the workplace to generate benchmark data that make them interpretable by employers.

SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROGRAMS IN OUR SCHOOLS THAT ARE LINKED TO HIGH-DEMAND, HIGH-SKILL OCCUPATIONS AND INDUSTRIES. COMPLETION OF THESE PROGRAMS SHOULD RESULT IN ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS INCLUDING AND EXTENDING BEYOND THE HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA AND TO OCCUPATIONAL CREDENTIALS. Costs and lack of qualified staff should not hamper the development of programs sited in our schools, or industries or both, for which there is great local and national demand. Schools should be supported in transforming their curriculums and their focus from subject-based to career-based programs; and schools must join forces with resources in business and industry. Standards for occupational credentials should be established by employers and labor with input by schools.

CREATE FUNDING MECHANISMS FOR ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING THESE REFORMS IN THE SCHOOLS AND WORKPLACES AND FOR SUPPORTING YOUTH WHILE IN WORK-BASED TRAINING. Programming for improved student options that bridge the school and workplace may require creative use and reallocation of existing education and training funds and resources. It may require the redirection of traditional sources of student grants and loans for attendance at postsecondary education institutions to places of learning in workplaces. It may also require new sources of revenue from the business sector to support instruction in the workplace.

## CONCLUSION

The Council believes that basis for a highly skilled work force begins in the school years, with a range of quality educational programs and work-related experiences that allow students to reach high school graduation equipped to tackle immediately the world of work, or to continue in some form of postsecondary education or training, or both. Failure to ensure that every young person has considered these options and has the knowledge, skills and supports to pursue any of these options—or all of them—is to circumscribe the individual's choices for life.

Schools must provide the needed guidance and pathways to continued education and employment for many students who lack the direction provided by families and communities with connections to education, employment, and their respective networks. Schools must meld the best of the academic and occupational school curriculums to maximize the motivation and achievement of all students and to support the development of a cadre of technical and skilled employees the United States sorely needs to remain competitive in the world market. In improving our curriculums; elevating our expectations of students, staff and other institutions in

the community; and building carefully structured paths that lead to continued learning and productive employment for all, we generate new hope for many young people and a new commitment to a large segment of our school population.

## CCSSO INITIATIVES

Since 1986, the Council of Chief State School Officers has focused its efforts on policy formulation and activities that result in quality education and services for children and youth at risk of school failure or other lack of success. In 1987 the policy statement, "Assuring School Success for Students At Risk," was adopted unanimously by Council members. The statement set forth a set of state guarantees for educational and related services for at-risk students. If implemented, these guarantees should result in the high school graduation of virtually all students by the year 2000.

During 1987 and 1988, the Council adopted as its central theme the imperative of meeting the educational needs of at-risk children and youth. CCSSO activities for 1988 included specific projects based on 1987 recommendations, as well as new policies and programs in support of early childhood and parent education programs.

In 1989 the Council initiated a two-year program to examine ways policymakers could create an environment supportive of a dramatically improved quality and kind of learning in schools. The Council's effort included both an examination of proposals to restructure schools and an analysis of new research about the nature of learning. The focus in 1990 on restructuring learning called for fundamental changes in the relationship among individual students, teachers, knowledge, and other students in ways that support the development of higher order learning for all students.

It is the Council's objective that by the year 2000, the educational attainment of at-risk children and youth will be comparable to those children and youth judged not to be at risk. This objective will be evidenced not only in graduation rates but in the readiness of all young people to prepare for and embark on challenging careers and continuing studies.